darmes complained to the inspector of prisons that the subversive sketches signed "S" came from the work gang in Alexandrovsk. The inspector forwarded the complaint to the superintendent, and the latter called me to his office, showed me the clippings, and asked whether I recognized the signature.

"I shall not deceive you," I replied. "These are my articles. But I would like to see how the gendarmes will prove that charge. You know how stupid they are." This remark was balm to the superintendent. He began to tell stories about the stupidity of the gendarmes and his own shrewdness. At the end of the conversation, however, I promised him to stop working for Rozhkov's newspaper.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF FREEDOM

In December, 1912, I was released from Alexandrovsk and became a deportee in Siberia, a status in many respects similar to that of paroled convicts in the United States.

As freedom approached, I tried to evaluate my experience in the past years. More than seven years had elapsed since I had joined the revolutionary movement—two years of political activity, five years of prison. I had seen terrible things during that time and had lived through grim hours. But what I had suffered personally had not been much in comparison with privations of others around me. Indeed, I was leaving the prison with a feeling of guilt for the comfortable conditions in the rear building of the Ekaterinoslav Castle, in the political ward of Novgorod, in the work gang of Alexandrovsk.

I counted those who would not return. The chance of survival in Ekaterinoslav had not been more than one in a hundred. How did it happen that I was still alive? Perhaps I had more physical resistance or was luckier than others. Or was it the consequence of the talisman that protected me against humiliation and self-pity—my theory of "assignment"?

The seven-odd years of political activity and prison had created an abyss between the intellectually arrogant youth I had been on entering the University and my new self. I realized that the scientific career I had started so promisingly with my first precocious book was ruined. St. Petersburg, the University, and my family seemed far away. With so many friends gone, I felt lonelier than ever. And I felt no impulse to find new friends, to associate with other people, or belong to a community. Looking forward, I saw only emptiness—no plans, no desires, no strong ties to anything.

At the same time, however, I felt that prison experience had enriched me. The dungeons had taught me to see the trees and flowers,